

Introduction

In any theistic religion, the concept of God rests at the core of its beliefs, tenets and practices, and it determines what its adherents regard as admissible or otherwise. It shapes their attitudes towards others whom they label as "unbelievers." It inspires their perceptions, formulating how they conceive their role in life, how they should treat one another, what they should do when they sin or fall into error. It determines the extent of their humanity and provides them with a yardstick to measure that of others.

It dictates to them ways to treat other living beings around them: animals, plants, the environment at large, how they look at nature and how they envision their responsibility to protect and preserve it. It paves their path to worldly happiness and to salvation in the hereafter. No words can over-estimate the significance of such a concept in any given faith based on the belief in a Supreme Deity, God Almighty, Creator of everything and everyone. This book is written primarily for open-minded non-Muslims.

This is why I have refrained from using the usual salutation of "peace be upon him and his family" whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, or "peace be upon him" whenever the name of a messenger or a prophet of Allah or an Imam is mentioned. Needless to say, the primary reference utilized is the Holy Qur'an. A colon (:) separates the number of its Chapter (Sura) from that of the verse (aya). For example, 2:255 refers to Chapter 2 (al-Baqarah, the Cow), verse 255, or ayat al-kursi, verse of the Throne.

For about quarter of a century living in exile here in America, I have had the opportunity to closely discern the attitudes of non-Muslims around me towards Islam and Muslims, often visiting a number of churches __ and one synagogue in Atlanta, Georgia __ to observe first-hand how they worship God, what their faith enjoins or prohibits, how they look at those who do not subscribe to their beliefs.

When I was living in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1972 to 1979, as many as five churches had my name and address on their mailing lists. Beautiful young ladies would come to my apartment to escort me and my roommates (a Pakistani Hindu named Udeshi and an Indian Sunni Muslim named Aziz) to various church functions. The food was always good, although I and my Indian roommate had to always make sure no pork or any of its derivatives would pollute our systems. And there were many good looking young ladies there.

The trap was well set for us. And we were single and available, young and healthy. And temptation was always there. I had asked those churches to place my name and address on their mailing list, to let me know when they had a function, and to send their good-looking young ladies to my apartment for the ride to the church. All of that did not happen coincidentally. In my view, nothing, absolutely nothing, happens by a coincident, not even a stone rolling down a mountain or a leaf falling on the ground.

Everything happens according to a plan put forth by the Planner and Executor of the world, the One and Only God Who created it and everything in it. "Accidentally," "coincidentally," and "by chance" are words and expressions which should be eliminated from language altogether; they are intruders. They are sacrilegious.

My visits to churches and Christian homes were never done out of a pure desire to have a good time, to socialize, to have one girl-friend or more as some of my roommates had anticipated, nor to kill time. To me, killing time is one of the worst murder crimes. I had a burning desire to see things for myself. Some promoters of those church programs were more aggressive than others.

They wanted to gauge how serious we were about our religious beliefs in order, perhaps, to evaluate their chances to succeed in converting us to Christianity, and they did so in various ways. There were occasions, therefore, when tempers rose high, accusations flew, and offenses committed. Yes, there were times when I had to pay a dear price for defending my Islamic creed in the face of attacks launched by those promoters, for not keeping my mouth shut as was the case with my nice Indian roommate Aziz who just did not want to offend anybody. I have never hesitated to offend others, including my closest friends, when I was convinced that they were offending the Almighty.

And there was always a price to pay, and I gladly paid it even when it hurt very badly. This is why I have been called many names by many people, by Muslims and non-Muslims. I still am being called names, but it is O.K. with me as long as the Almighty calls me a good, though far from being perfect, servant of His. I do not care if all people of the world call me bad names. As long as my Lord and Maker keeps the gates of His mercy open for me, name calling does not hurt me in the least.

From the very beginning, I realized that those churches were doing their best ___ and worst ___ to convert non-Christians to Christianity; after all, is not this what missionary work is all about?! And who could be better candidates than single foreign students studying for their graduate degrees? Once they go home, these students will disseminate their new faith with zeal and enthusiasm to others. At least this is what those churches were hoping. This is why many of their preachers and priests were distributing anti-Islamic literature, thinking that by attacking others' beliefs, they would protect their own and win new converts.

They had forgotten about the laws of action and reaction. Some of those churches were showing movies derogatory to Islam and to the Prophet of Islam. Since my life's motto has always been the Prophet's tradition saying, "One who remains silent rather than says the truth is a tongue-tied Satan," I refuse to be

that Satan.

I almost broke into a fist fight once with an Atlanta pastor who was then my host and who was assaulting Islam and the Prophet of Islam; he had to shut his mouth after listening to my counter-arguments and to a volley of charges of my own against today's version of Christianity which included tracing the deviation in the Christian Church back to its very first years. I explained to him how much respect Muslims have for Christ and his saintly mother and juxtaposed it with the disrespect of people like him towards our Abrahamic faith.

I reminded him of the bloody and shameful history of the barbaric Crusades which were sponsored by the Church, of the Muslim lands they burnt and looted and of the Muslim blood they shed, of the Muslims who were brought to Europe as slaves. He soon realized that he was facing a formidable foe who was fully knowledgeable of the history of the Christian church and who, for many years, had studied such bloody history academically and written numerous term papers about it, and who knew fully well the extent of mischief inflicted in the past and is still being inflicted upon the Islamic world by the colonizers and imperialists who profess to follow Christ, the prince of peace, the man who never hurt anyone or anything.

He realized how ignorant he was about our faith, how tolerant our religion is, how hypocritical most leaders of the Islamic world nowadays are, how much the so-called Christian West is indebted to Islamic civilization, and how rude he was in attacking my beliefs despite his knowledge of the fact that I was then editor of a globally circulated Islamic publication¹.

The memory of the encounter with that pastor still boils the blood in my veins even today, despite the passage of so many years; it is in defense of this precious Islamic creed that I write this book hoping the Almighty will accept and bless it, praying that He accept and bless the other articles and books I have written, edited, or translated during all these years and, God willing, in the years to come.

This incident took place before the outbreak of the glorious Islamic Revolution in Iran. Needless to say, this Revolution enraged and provoked the enemies of Islam, mostly Zionist Jews who dominate the public opinion through their total control of the information and news media. These Zionist Jews also control the financial and political systems of the West in general and of the U.S. in particular.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran provided these traditional enemies of Islam and those whom they brainwashed with a golden opportunity to vent their contempt towards Islam and Muslims, making the latter the object of their daily attacks and favourite pastime. I had, of course, to bear my share of persecution, being a staunch and uncompromising follower of the Shi`a Ithna-`Asheri School of Muslim Law, and an admirer of the late Ayatullah Ruhullah al-Mousawi al-Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and arch-enemy of all arrogant tyrants and bigots wherever they are.

I was, like millions others, inspired by this great Revolution that signaled the dawn of freedom for all the downtrodden and persecuted peoples of the world, not only for the Muslims. The details of the

persecution to which I was exposed will Insha–Allah be incorporated in Volume Two of my autobiography titled Memoirs of a Shi`a Missionary in America. Volume One has been received so well, many readers have suggested its text makes the plot for a first–class movie!

The book in your hands is not written for those who deliberately misrepresent our Islamic faith, for these will never see anything except through their own tinted glasses, and there is no cure for their blindness. These are mentally and psychologically sick with a sundry of contagious and terminal diseases: prejudice, arrogance, close–mindedness, racist superiority complexes..., and it is a waste of precious time to try to deal with them; they are rubbish unworthy of attention.

Rather, it is written for open–minded and fair non–Muslims who sincerely wish to know how Muslims conceive their Creator. It is for these non–Muslims, and for those Muslims whose extended stay in any non–Muslim country may have taken its toll on their faith, who changed their names from "Jasim" to "Jessy," from "Husain" to "Jose," etc., that this book is written.

If the reader wishes to comment on this book's contents or on those of my other books, I encourage him to write me; my address is included in the Conclusion. Such comments, be they compliments or complaints, are always welcome. May Allah ta'a`la guide us to His

Path, Allahomma Ameen.

Yasin T. al–Jibouri

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1996 Falls Church, Virginia, U.S.A.

¹. At that time, I was editing Islamic Affairs newsletter which was being mailed out to readers in all U.S. States as well as in 67 countries world–wide.